

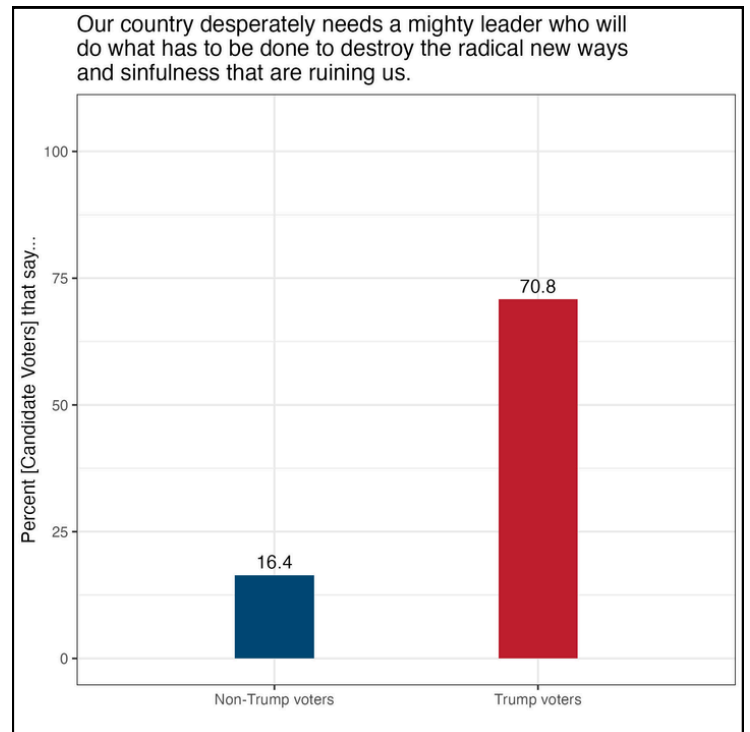
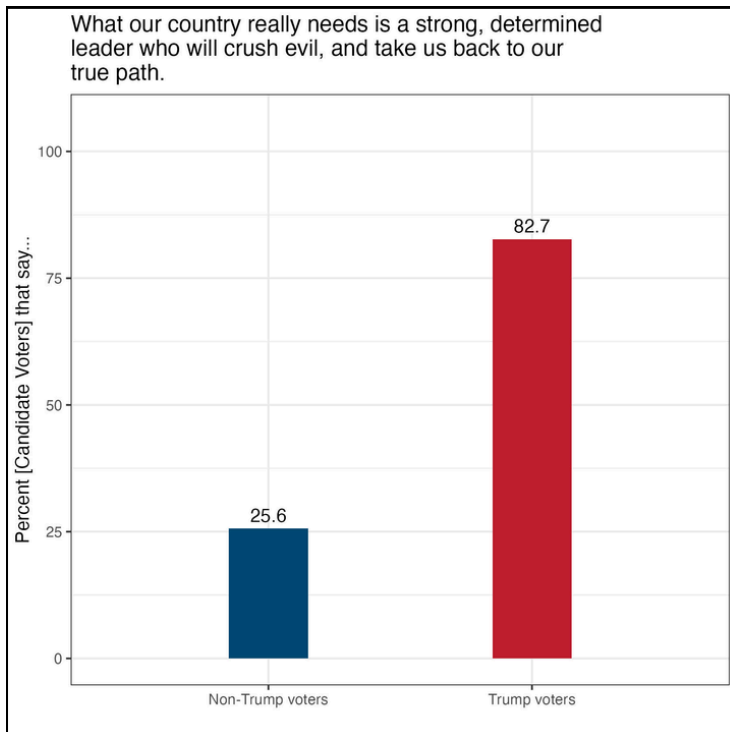
Trump Voters Back Strong Leadership — But Not Radical Democratic Reform

By: Tyler Leigh and Mackenzie Dobson

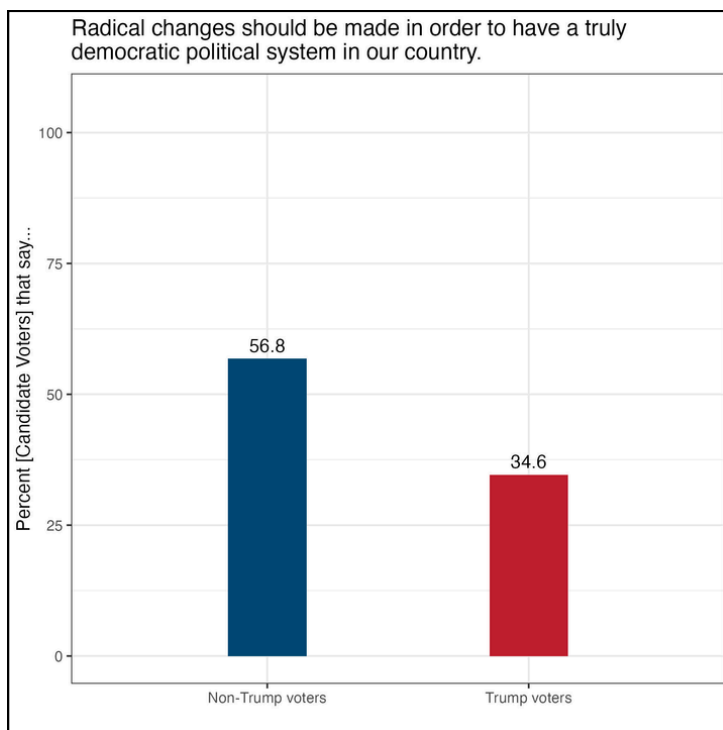
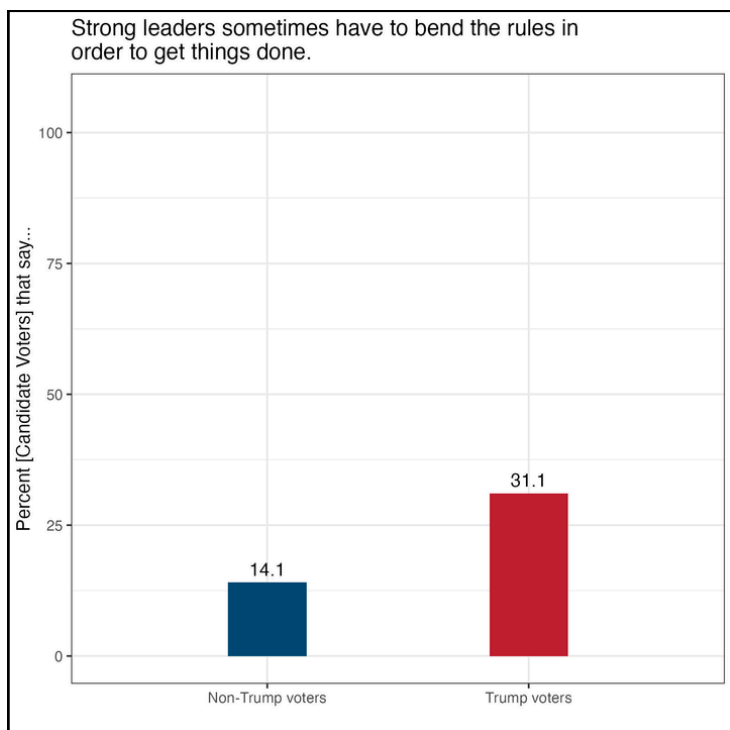
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President Donald Trump claims that he has a mandate from Americans to disrupt the status quo and dramatically reshape American politics. New data from the Notre Dame Health of Democracy Survey (Nov–Dec 2024) suggest that while Trump voters do support strong, rule-bending leadership, that support does not extend to calls for radical change to American democracy.

Across four measures of support for strong or authoritarian leadership, Trump voters consistently favor strong leaders more than non-Trump voters. For instance, a majority of Trump voters (**82.7%**) say the country needs a strong, determined leader who will “crush evil and take us back to our true path” — compared to just **25.6%** of non-Trump voters. Similarly, **70.8%** of Trump voters agree that the U.S. needs a leader who will “destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us,” while just **16.4%** of non-Trump voters say the same.



When it comes to leaders bending the rules to get things done, a minority of Trump voters (**31.1%**) support leaders bending the rules. Although a minority of Trump voters, it is still more than double the share of non-Trump voters (**14.1%**) who support leaders bending the rules. Interestingly, this trend reverses when it comes to support for radical changes to American democracy. A majority of non-Trump voters (**56.8%**) say radical changes are needed to have a truly democratic political system — compared to just **34.6%** of Trump voters. This suggests that while Trump supporters favor strong leaders, they do not seem to want to completely leave democracy behind. Indeed, many of Trump’s supporters may be reluctant to support changes that dramatically reshape the structure of politics in America.



Together, the findings show that although many Trump voters appear to support decisive, authoritarian leadership, only a minority of Trump voters support leaders bending rules and radically remaking American politics. Further, people who didn’t vote for President Trump seem to overwhelmingly oppose strong leaders bending rules and radically remaking American democracy. These data call into question the strength of President Trump’s so-called mandate to reshape American politics. Although his base of supporters favor a strong leader, they do not seem to support dramatic changes to American politics. And the broader American public, many of whom did not vote for President Trump, show a clear aversion to Trump’s brand of strong-man, rule-bending leadership.

These data come from the Fall 2024 Notre Dame Health of Democracy Survey fielded by NORC/UChicago via the Amerispeak panel in late November and early December 2024. Upcoming Rooney Reports will continue to feature insights from the Notre Dame Health of Democracy Survey that explore how Americans’ attitudes shift in response to Trump’s actions, as well as the public’s broader expectations for American democracy.